

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, PINT, HO

SUBJECT: AGRARIAN REFORM WEEK

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: HONDURAN AGRARIAN WEEK WAS DECLARED BY CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR ON 18 AUGUST. THE PURPOSE WAS TO EXPLAIN AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAMS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE COUNTRY. OSTENSIBLY, POINTS OF VIEW WERE SOLICITED FROM ALL AFFECTED SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY ALTHOUGH PRIVATE SECTOR ELEMENTS CRITICAL OF AGRARIAN REFORM CHARGED THEY WERE GIVEN SHORT SHRIFT BY GOH AGRARIAN REFORM OFFICIALS. SPEAKERS FROM FOUR L.A. COUNTRIES GAVE ADDRESSES DURING THE SIX-DAY SERIES OF CONFERENCES.

D. COL. MARIO MALDONADO, DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN INSTITUTE (INA) ALLEGED THAT REACTIONARY ELEMENTS IN HONDURAS AND OTHER C.A. COUNTRIES WERE ATTEMPTING TO FRUSTRATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW THROUGH TERRORISM AND THAT THE SAME GROUP WAS PREPARING AN INVASION OF HONDURAS. OVERWHELMINGLY  
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PRO-AGRARIAN-REFORM AUDIENCE SHOUTED THAT THEY DID NOT WANT TO

SEE A RETURN TO THE CONSTITUTION WHEN A QUESTION TO THAT EFFECT WAS ADDRESSED TO THE INA DIRECTOR. AGRARIAN WEEK IS VIEWED AS HAVING CAUSED MORE DIVISIVENESKS BETWEEN PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS OF HONDURAS' AGRARIAN REFORM LAW. END SUMMARY.

2. CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR INAUGURATED "HONDURAN AGRARIAN WEEK" ON 5 AUGUST WITH A BRIEF SPEECH BEFORE A GROUP WHICH INCLUDED GOH MINISTERS, MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, AND INA OFFICIALS. MELGAR SAID THAT AGRARIAN WEEK WAS DECLARED IN ORDER TO: 1) EXPLAIN THOROUGHLY THE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW AND HOW IT WILL TRANSFORM THE HONDURAN RURAL SECTOR; 2) TO HEAR THE VIEWS OF THE INA OFFICIALS CHARGED WITH IMPLEMENTING THE LAW AS WELL AS THOSE OF INVITED EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF AGRARIAN REFORM; AND 3) TO ANALYZE THE POINTS OF VIEW OF "CAMPESESINOS", WORKERS, FARMERS, CATTLEMEN, AGRONOMISTS, AND OTHERS WHO MIGHT OFFER POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SERIES OF CONFERENCES TO BE HELD DURING THE WEEK. BUT DESPITE MELGAR'S CALL FOR A BROAD-BASED DIALOGUE, THE CONSERVATIVE, VOCAL CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION (FENAGH) WAS NOT INVITED TO PARTICIPATE UNTIL AFTER IT PUBLICIZED THAT FACT IN THE LOCAL PRESS ON 21 AUGUST. AFTER RECEIVING THE INVITATION FENAGH'S PRESIDENT, FERNANDO LARDIZIBAL, DECLINED IT BECAUSE IT WAS "POORLY TIMED."

3. CONFIERNCES WERE HELD DAILY THROUGH 23 AUGUST. SEVERAL EXPERTS ON AGRARIAN REFORM FROM OTHER LATING AMERICAN COUNTRIES SPOKE AT THE CONFERENCES. THEY WERE: VICTOR JIMENEZ, EX-MINISTER OF AGRICULUTURE IN VENEZUELA; CARLOS DELGADO, A PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL; BENJAMIN NUNEZ, A ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST AND EX-MINISTER OF LABOR OF COSTA RICA; DR. FRANCISCO OLIART, A PERUVIAN LEGAL EXPERT IN AGRARIAN REFORM MATTERS; AND IVAN RESTREPO, DIRECTOR OF ADVANCED ECONOMIC STUDIES AT THE POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE OF MEXICO.

4. PERHAPS THE MOST INTERESTING OF THE CONFERENCES WAS THAT GIVEN BY MARIO MALDONADO, DIRECTOR OF INA. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, MALDONADO ALLEGED THAT THE HONDURAN MILITARY HAD IDENTIFIED TWO HONDURANS WHO HAD MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE "MANO BLANCO" (WHITE HAND) OF TUATEMALA. THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS "TO SOW TERRORISM IN HONDURAS AND THEREBY FURSTRATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROCESS IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THIS COUNTRY." HE ALSO ALLEGED THAT "WE KNOW THAT VARIOUS BUSINESSMEN HAVE MOBILIZED THEMSELVES THROUGH CENTRAL AMERICAN AND HAVE CONTACTED ELEMENTS WHICH YOU (THE AUDIENCE) ALREADYKNOWANDWHICHYOU CAN IMAGINE IN ORDER TO MOUNT A SYSTEMATIZED CAMPAIGN AGAINST HONDURASAND PREPARE AN INVASION AGAINST THIS COUNTRY."

5. AN INTERESTING OCCURRENCE DURING THE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER PERIOD FOLLOWING MALDONADO'S DISCOURSE WAS THE REACTION OF THE OVERWHELMINGLY PRO-AGRARIAN-REFORM AUDIENCE WHEN INA DIRECTOR ASKED THE AUDIENCE TO RESPOND TO A WRITTEN QUESTION HE HAD RECEIVED FROM A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE. THE PERSON WHO SUBMITTED THE QUESTION WANTED TO KNOW IF THE ARMED FORCES SHOULD ALLOW THE COUNTRY TO RETURN TO A CONSTITUTIONAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT. THE AUDIENCE'S RESPONSE WAS AN EMPHATIC "NO". THAT RESPONSE, OBSTENSIBLY, RESULTS FROM THE FEELING THAT ONE OF THE COROLLARIES TO THE RETURN TO THE CONSTITUTION WOULD BE THE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE AGRARIAN REFORM EQUATE TO EMASCULATION OF EFFECTIVE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAMS.

6. COMMENT: IF THE AGRARIAN WEEK WAS INTENDED TO CLARIFY THE UNCERTAINTIES ARISING FROM THE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW, THEN IT WAS A FAILURE. MANY OBSERVERS OF THE CONFERENCES FELT THAT THE SPEAKERS AND AUDIENCES WERE "LOADED" WITH THOSE WHO FAVORED THE RAPID IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW AND WHO WERE NOT RECEPTIVE TO CRITICISM OF IT. THE FRANK EXCHANGE OF POINTS OF VIEW BY ALL SECTORS OF THE HONDURAN ECONOMY NEVER MATERIALIZED. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PROPONENTS AND THE OPPONENTS OF TE LAW SEEM TO HAVE INCREASED, NOT DECREASED, AS A RESULT OF THE CONFERENCES.  
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